

Erie County Fire Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes

July 27, 2006

Call to Order & Opening Prayer: The meeting was called to order by Chairman G Wittington who also led with an opening prayer.

Roll Call:

Chairman Gerard Wittington	Present	Co-Chairman Douglas Larkin	Present
Sec./Treasurer John Wicka	Present	Dennis Allen	Present
Bruce Atkins	Present	Charles Bethge	Excused
William Boldt	Present	Todd Catalano	Excused
Donald Connolly	Present	James Fyock	Present
Dennis Gibbs	Present	Christopher Higgins	Absent
Daniel Kamman	Absent	Michael Lombardo	Absent
James Lawida	Absent	Richard Litfin	Present
Richard Mariani	Present	Steve Matisz	Present
Robert Newell	Present	James Pluta	Present
Bret Rider	Present	Ronald Rozler	Excused
Edward Saturnus	Excused	Charles Stewart	Present
William G. Szewc	Excused		

Also in attendance were Deputy Commissioner McCullough, JT Glass from ODP, Legislator Robert Reynolds, Mark Winters from Central Police Services and Doug Jensen from the EMS Advisory Board.

Reading of Minutes of Previous Meeting: The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed and J Fyock made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. D Connolly seconded the motion, which was duly voted on and carried.

Reading of Correspondence: Two pieces of correspondence was read and held for either new or old business.

Commissioner's & Committee Reports

Commissioner's Report: No report

Deputy Commissioner's Report: Deputy Commissioner McCullough presented his report, which is attached. He also indicated that he had a discussion with Chief Keith Hawes of Akron Fire Department regarding communications and dispatch problems. Chief Hawes is expected to attend the meeting to speak further of the problems.

Deputy Commissioner McCullough also advised that he submitted his division's budget for 2007 this week and it is the same as 2006. He advised that nothing is being lost or reduced.

A discussion followed on training with Legislator Reynolds inquiring how candidates are selected for courses inasmuch he has heard concerns from some departments that they are unable to get firefighters into courses. Deputy Commissioner McCullough advised that 50% of the candidates are allowed from the host company and this was based on a recommendation from the Fire Advisory Board made a few years back. This information is supplied in training announcements and other forms of communications to fire chiefs.

Legislator Reynolds gave appreciation to Deputy Commissioner McCullough for working with the legislature's Public Safety Committee on their efforts to get clerical help for his office.

B Boldt had a question on requirements for Firefighter 1 instructors. He indicated that he was told the newly certified instructors were under the assumption they were going to get paid for becoming certified in teaching (assisting) with the FF1 course. Deputy Commissioner McCullough advised they will be compensated when they teach the course. Becoming certified in FF1 was part of the job requirements. B Boldt advised that some of the instructors assisted in the FF1 course for 32 hours but were told they were only to be compensated for 25 hours of pay. Deputy Commissioner McCullough advised that if any of the instructors have pay or compensation questions, they should speak to him directly so he can investigate their concerns.

Officer Reports:

Chairman's Report: Chairman Whittington reported on the following:

- **County Charter & Budget Process:** The effort to change the county charter to merge CPS and DES was not approved by the legislature. Legislator Reynolds advised that many of the legislators had several questions and concerns about the manner in which the proposal was formulated. As a result, the matter

will not be going before the voters in November. He could not be specific on what the major concerns were but believes some of the concerns were about the size of the proposed board of trustees being too large. He advised there continues to be a lot of interest in this proposal to merge and steps may be taken to accomplish this without a charter change. However, at this time, it is status quo on the structure of the two departments. A discussion followed as to who is the Commissioner of Emergency Services since the post was not filled after the retirement of Commissioner Walters. Deputy Commissioner McCullough advised that based on the current charter, the senior deputy in the department, in this case Greg Skibitsky, is the acting head of the department. As a result of the current structure, two separate budgets will be presented instead of one for a merged department. Legislator Reynolds gave a background on the process of appointing a replacement to head the Department of Emergency Services. He indicated that the Public Safety Committee will begin meeting every other Wednesday, beginning again in September and he welcomed input and attendance from FAB members at the meetings. A discussion followed on the budget process, etc. As a result of the discussion, a motion was made by B Boldt, seconded by J Fyock, that the secretary send a letter to the County Executive (with a copy to the clerk of the legislature) recommending that the position of Commissioner of Emergency Services be filled until such time that a change in the county charter takes place or permanent plans are in place with regard to the structure of the department. In addition, it is recommended that the FAB be asked to be part of the selection process for any such appointment to the position. The motion was duly voted on and carried.

- **Alerting Project:** The Chairman advised the project continues to move forward and all chiefs in the county were sent a package of detailed information concerning the project. He reminded FAB members that they need to remind their respective organizations that the alerting rosters need to be back to the county by August 14 but suggested they get them done ASAP. He explained how the pagers will operate and how cap codes will be programmed into the units. He advised the time table to begin installing station house equipment is scheduled for early October. The pagers have been ordered but due to budgetary considerations, the number was reduced to 9,200 from 10,000. More can be purchased down the road. However, the rosters are important at this time so the appropriate number of pagers can be ordered at this time. There was a further discussion regarding potential interest by the FAB to recommend to the fire service of the possibility of purchasing extended service contracts for the pagers after the two year service warranty expires. All the FAB members were asked to take this issue back to their respective organizations and report back at the next meeting.
- **800 MHz Project:** The Chairman reported this is moving ahead, although rather slowly. A flyer will be sent to all fire chiefs soon bringing them up-to-date on the project and asking for specific information concerning a desire to be involved and the number of mobile and portable radios they presently have in their inventories. A major hold-up in the project at this time is that the county is waiting for Statewide Wireless (SWN) to announce dates as to when they will begin to build the infrastructure so the county can move ahead on their plans to accomplish portable coverage. It is important that the questionnaires be completed and returned to the county.

Co-Chairman's Report: No report.

Secretary' Report: No report.

School Committee: C Stuart questioned if hiring more county instructors was on hold. Deputy Commissioner McCullough advised that now that the FF1 boot camp is completed, he will move on bringing more county instructors on board.

Drill Towers Committee: The Chairman reported for WG Szewc that the committee did have a meeting since the last FAB meeting. A proposal was submitted for capital improvements into the 2007 budget in order to replace and improve the training and tower facilities. It was recommended that \$5 million be set aside for 2007 with \$5 million more in each of the next 5 years. All the facilities will be replaced to bring our facilities up to date. When these changes take place, the facilities must be used as they are designed for (e.g. live burn building as a live burn building, a smoke house as a smoke house) inasmuch as too much variance is being taken to use facilities for revolutions they are not built for. The Chairman also advised that J Wicka is reaching out to the state legislative delegation to determine if any funds are left over from the Public Safety Campus project and if these funds can be used towards new training facilities. More on this will be reported at the next meeting.

Radio Committee: The Chairman reported that there are rumors being circulated that the county is soliciting area towns to have their dispatching switched over to the county. He emphasized that is not occurring and that any discussions about moving dispatch operations to the PSC are being initiated by the towns. He specifically mentioned a discussion he was approached about involving the Town of Hamburg and he advised that he was told that the town supervisor approached the county about the possibility of assuming this service for the town.

He also spoke about the work being done to improve radio reliability in Holland. He was advised by the owner of Holland Speedway that they are receptive to working with the county to assist in improving radio reliability in the Holland area. This development occurred just this week. Deputy Commissioner McCullough advised that he was not aware of this development and will look for further discussions on this from the Holland chief.

Legislation & Fire Prevention: R Mariani advised that there has been significant state legislation enacted in the last session but most of it involves fire districts. There was nothing else of significance to report at this time.

Budget & Wall of Fame: B Atkins advised that the proposed guidelines for adding individuals to the wall were sent out last month but he has had little feedback. The Chairman advised he received several e-mail responses to this and will forward the information to the committee chairman. Another meeting of the committee will be scheduled to review all the recommendations.

Rules & Mutual Aid: D Connolly reported on the following:

- Rules – any proposed rules changes are on-hold pending the outcome of the discussion on the county charter revisions and clarifications about what the structure of the department will look like in the short-term and long-term.
- Mutual Aid – He spoke with J Foley of the Buffalo Firefighters union and was told he may attend the next FAB meeting to informally discuss this issue. R Mariani indicated he had a similar discussion with J Foley and hoped that he will attend the next meeting.

Erie County Chiefs: B Boldt reported that the organization will not meet again until September and at this time, a fall training seminar is scheduled. More information on this will be coming in the future.

Erie County Vol. Firemen's Assoc.: B Rider reported that plans are in place for a firefighter's weekend at Darien Lake and tickets for this event have been sent to all departments.

Fire District Officers: No report.

Fire Police: B Atkins reported that their last meeting was July 18. Even though it was not well attended, there was a lot of discussion concerning the Alerting and 800 MHz projects and it was considered a good meeting.

Old Business: None

New Business:

Akron Communication & Dispatch Problems: The correspondence from Akron Chief Hawes was discussed and the chief briefed the board in incidents that occurred in his district when reporting and dispatching alarms. As examples he cited the following situations:

1. On May 6, a firefighter called 9-1-1 and had a very difficult time getting through to report an incident. The dispatcher could not locate where the call was or originating from. Commissioner Comerford was advised of the incident but has not heard anything back about this.
2. On June 6, there were two calls on Crittenden Road and the wrong departments were dispatched. The calls for these incidents were made by cell phones and went to the Buffalo 9-1-1 call center. The calls from the Buffalo Center to Amherst were lost while being transferred. There are similar problems occurring when calls are being transferred. He wants to make sure these problems are eliminated and avoided in the case of a true emergency.
3. On July 17, two calls were received within one hour of each other. One call was made to 9-1-1 and went unanswered. The caller made a call directly to Amherst FC and the call was dispatched. In the second instance, a call was again made to 9-1-1 and again went unanswered. The caller instead called the local fire station and received assistance as notification was made to Amherst FC and the appropriate dispatch was done.
4. He also relayed information he received from a past chief he is acquainted with who reported similar problems.

A discussion followed and Mark Winters from CPS advised these reported incidents are totally not acceptable and he advised steps are being taken to eliminate repeat situations. He advised the county is in the process of integrating operations into the Public Safety Campus and he believes that with this integration, these situation should not occur. There are dispatchers who are being retrained so they have a better knowledge of the operations and systems. He is looking at the situations that are occurring along Crittenden Road to see what is causing the problems. He will respond to each incident and report back the findings to Chief Hawes. The move

to the new campus is in transition and a new phone system and 9-1-1 system will be in place next month. He is working hard to make sure these incidents do not happen again.

S Matisz relayed similar situations he is dealing with as a dispatcher for Amherst FC.

D Larkin relayed information about a call that occurred on July 10. Calls to report an incident were made by both cell and landline and both went unanswered by 9-1-1. More and more of these instances are coming to light and these are severe problems. M Winters advised he was aware of the incident reported by D Larkin and advised that dispatch received five calls reporting the incident and appropriate units were dispatched within 1 minute of receiving the first call.

A lengthily general discussion followed and M Winters again made a commitment to address and fix these problems. The Chairman advised he was appreciative of the work by Mr. Winters to address and fix the problems and requested a copy of his report to Chief Hawes so we can eventually close the issue.

TAC & MOC Demo: The chairman advised he received a proposal from the county for the MOC1 to attend a future FEB meeting for the purpose of demonstrating interoperability radio communications and the functions of the AC1000 cross-band equipment. He suggested doing this at a separate meeting instead of before or after a regular FAB meeting. It was decided to hold a special demonstration on Wednesday September 14 at 7:00 at the fire academy and open this up the other advisory boards and all the D units.

August Meeting Change: A motion was made by R Mariani, seconded by D Larkin, to change the location of the next meeting to the Edward Cotter fireboat and the start time to be 6:30 pm. The secretary will send appropriate notice to all members.

Fire Course Education Credits: R Newell advised he spoke with Chuck Nagel, who is the head of the fire technology course at ECC. He advised there are efforts underway to award college credits to those firefighters taking state sponsored courses. He was asked by the Chairman to gather more information on this and report back at the next meeting.

Boot Camp Media Coverage: J Fyock praised the media coverage that occurred as a result of the last FF1 Boot Camp. The media reports were very positive and were excellently presented. R Newell advised that this was due to the efforts of Deputy Commissioner McCullough and Tiger Schmittendorf. Everyone agreed this was a very positive boost for the fire service.

Treasurer's Report

The balance prior to tonight was \$320.02. Tonight's receipts were \$19.00 for a new net worth of \$339.02. A motion was made by B Atkins to accept the report. The motion was seconded by D Connolly, duly voted on and carried.

Adjournment

With no further business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned at 9:55 with the next meeting scheduled for August 31, 2006.

Respectfully submitted
John R. Wicka
Secretary/Treasurer



County of Erie

JOEL A. GIAMBRA
County Executive

JAMES M. McCULLOUGH
Deputy Commissioner
Fire Safety

EARL R. SCHMITTENDORF
Assistant Fire Coordinator

DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

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ERIE COUNTY FIRE ADVISORY BOARD FIRE SAFETY REPORT JULY 27, 2006

- The grounds here at the Cheektowaga training tower are all cleaned, the old haz-mat panel truck is gone, the concrete barriers and pipe is gone. I am waiting for an update on spraying the work areas for grass building.
- Secretarial staff in the office will be under way next few weeks, we acquired help from another office downtown, which will work well.
- Boot Camp: We graduated 38 Firefighters last Friday evening. It was another HOT training session, but every got through it.
- We are starting to work on the fall training schedule, classes should be ready to go starting in September. Remember to tell your Fire Chiefs to submit their request early.
- Hopefully we will be re-building the second floor in the "Live Burn Building" this coming month. The part time maintenance man has started and is working out very well.

- In July, we received a request from the Office of Fire Prevention & Control, requesting SEFU's, State Emergency Fire Units. These will be deployed to the flood areas in Broome & Delaware counties. (their description of equipment on next page)
Erie County responded on July 3rd, 2006 @ 03:00 hrs with 12 fire units, and returned to Erie County on July 4th @ midnight, 45 hours of work for there units.
- Earlier the week prior New York State Health Dept. requested 11 Ambulances to the same area, to assist in 911 calls and triage calls of the evacuate residents in the emergency shelters.
- We have been in discussion with the State Correction officers regarding our request for them to make us four Forcible Door units for our training towers, we have been advised that they will be done soon.

Jim McCullough

FC - 1

New York State Fire Mobilization and Mutual Aid

Storm Emergency Fire Unit Specifications

- 2 firefighters with personal protective equipment & SCBA with spare cylinders
- 4 wheel drive pickup or similar size vehicle (should be fire department owned)
- Portable pump
- Hard suction w/ strainer
- 200' of discharge hose
- necessary fittings, adapters, etc.
- Portable generator
- Electric adapters to adapt to household type receptacles
- Portable lighting for night operations
- fuel can for pump and generator
- Chain saw
- fuel and oil for chain saw
- two shovels
- Carbon Monoxide Detector
- 2 ½ gallon Pressurized Water Extinguisher
- Minimum 10 pound CO2 or Dry Chemical Extinguisher

NOTE: Personnel responding with a SEFU should be self sufficient for a minimum period of 72 hours. This should include food provisions and water.

Erie County Emergency Services Units Deployment to Broome and Delaware County Synopsis

Ambulance Deployment

11 ambulances	Vigilant Fire Co., Lancaster Vol. Ambulance Corps, Orchard Park Fire Dist., Reserve Hose Fire Co., East Amherst Fire Co., Getzville Fire Co., Big Tree Fire Co., Clarence Center Fire Co., Lake Shore Fire Co., Newton Abbott Fire Co., North Amherst Fire Co.
1 Paramedic Fly Car	East Amherst Fire Co.
1 coordinator	Dan Neaverth
52 personnel	
June 28, 2006 - July 1, 2006	

Storm Emergency Fire Unit Deployment

13 Storm Emergency Fire Units (SEFU)	Seneca Hose Fire Co. #1, Alden Hook and Ladder Co., Boston Fire Dept., Bowmansville Vol. Fire Assn., East Seneca Fire Co., Evans Center Fire Co., Jamison Road Vol. Fire Co., Lake Shore Fire Co., Millgrove Fire Co., N. Evans Fire Co., Twin District Fire Co., Vigilant Fire Co., West Falls Fire Co.
1 coordinator	James "Huey" McCullough
43 personnel	
July 3, 2006 - July 4, 2006	

Engine Company Deployment

1 Type I Engine	Crittenden Fire Company
5 personnel	
July 5, 2006 - July 7, 2006	